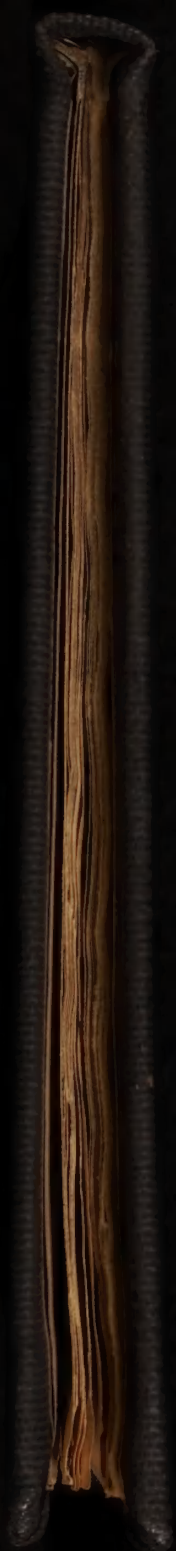


GILBERT - CURIOUS ADVENTURES BALTO., 1860







917.5
G-465
RB-4

L. Gilbert, John 7

THE
CURIOUS ADVENTURES,
PAINFUL EXPERIENCE,
AND
Laughable Difficulties
OF A MAN OF LETTERS,

While Traveling as a Peddler in the South during the late

HARPER'S FERRY EXCITEMENT.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

"He who hath traveled knoweth many things, and not the least interesting of the strange things he sees are the strange peculiarities of his own kind."—*Nature Exemplified.*

BALTIMORE, NEW YORK AND ST. LOUIS:
Published by John Gilbert & Co.
1860.

20348

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

STRANGERS VIEWED WITH SUSPICION IN THE SOUTH—WRITER TAKEN FOR A CONDUCTOR of the Underground Emancipation Railway—Niggers save him from being devoured by Dogs—His Life is Threatened—Escapes from an Excited Slaveholder—Good Qualities and Peculiarities of the Assailant—Difference in the Composition of Mankind, as shown in the Courtesy and Politeness of another Slaveholder.

CHAPTER II.

TAKEN FOR COOK—A LADY MAKES MISCHIEF—THE ALARM GIVEN—OVERTAKEN BY Three Men on Horseback—A Fussy Nigger—Writer Taken to a Tavern to be Examined—Becomes a Lion—A Midnight Predicament—Is Locked up—Discharged—A Jolly Landlord—Arrested Again—Niggers Terrified, and Fly at the Sight of a Peddler.

CHAPTER III.

UNPOPULARITY OF PEDDLERS—HARSH SENTENCE OF A PASSER-BY—INTERESTING CONVERSATION with a Landlord—A Black Divine overrunning with Abolitionism—A Whole Village Arrayed against Peddlers—Answers Received when Trying to Sell—Ladies are Insulting and Sarcastic—Give it up as a Bad Job—No Bed—An Adamantine Landlord—A horrible Night in the Open Air—A Feverish Dream—A Noble Irishman.

CHAPTER IV.

PEOPLE RESERVED—ARRESTED—BAR-ROOM SCENE—EXAMINATION—SEARCH OF PERSON and Property—Letters read—Night Guards—Yankee Swindlers—Political Meeting—Taken for a Spy—No Accommodations—Noble and Clever Printers—Hostile Remarks of a Lady and a Gentleman—Board with a Family of Virginians—Coat and Shirt taken from back to find Bullet Holes—Surrounded by 150 School Boys, &c. &c.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by
JOHN GILBERT,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of Maryland.

A PEDDLER'S EXPERIENCE

DURING THE HARPER'S FERRY EXCITEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

Strangers viewed with suspicion in the South.—Writer taken for a conductor of the underground emancipation railway.—Niggers save him from being devoured by dogs.—His life is threatened.—Escape from an excited slaveholder; his good qualities and peculiarities.—Difference in the composition of mankind, as shown in the courtesy and politeness of another slaveholder, &c.

THE object of the writer of these pages is not to manufacture strife or ill-feeling in our republic between the North and the South, but to state facts which occurred to him while he was traveling as a peddler through that portion of country in the neighborhood of Harper's Ferry, the stage upon which was performed acts which caused sorrow and pain to the heart of every well-wisher of his country.

At the South, the stranger or the traveler is at the present time viewed with distrust and suspicion. No matter how pure his motives, or how great his care not to give offense to those around him, he will scarcely be able to escape the coldness with which all new-comers are now received. That this should be the case is not singular. It would be extraordinary were it otherwise. When we consider the large quantity of fire-arms found in the location of the disturbance, we do not blame the South for being suspicious. When we think of the arm of rebellion raised against the South and against the *Constitution* of our country, we think she has a right to be careful of strangers within her borders.

Whatever rough treatment the writer was subject to in his southern tour, he freely, in consideration of the excitement running through that section of country, forgives all hands concerned in his ill-treatment and the overhauling of his person while following a lawful business. It is true that a man carrying a pack on his back, peddling his wares from house to house, is not quite so respectable a calling as being placed in a store containing a stock of \$25,000 worth of goods; but owing to the late commercial panic, having, like thousands of others, become reduced, I resolved to bring my mind down to my circumstance, and tried to make myself happy in being a traveling merchant.

I was but a few miles beyond the city of Baltimore when I was first made aware that some people thought I might be a Harper's Ferry bird—an outlaw and a dangerous character. The circumstances which brought this dark and obnoxious idea to my mind I will relate, by stating that I was attracted by the neat appearance of a large house, situated about four hundred yards from the main road. The building was neatly painted; the garden-front was handsome, and the surrounding grounds bespoke a skillful hand and much taste. The whole establishment had a friendly and inviting appearance; but, alas! appearances are deceiving, as my narrative will show. I knocked at the door very lightly, which was opened by a colored woman. I inquired for the lady of the house, and was told by the snow-ball door-attendant that her mistress could not be seen by strangers, and that I must state my business to bearer, in order that it might

be transmitted to the madam of the mansion. I did so, standing outside of the door awaiting an answer, when another colored woman approached me, whose face was all smile and good nature, inviting me to come inside and take a seat, and making a very pretty apology for the rudeness and want of manners on the part of the door-keeper for not asking the gentleman in and giving him a chair. I informed her that I was satisfied to stay where I was, as my entrance might be looked upon as an infringement; but she assured me that the dogs around the house were very ugly, and that it was unsafe for me to stay outside, as they had a fancy for lacerating strangers by inserting their fangs in the most fleshy part of their person. This statement was made to me in so earnest a manner and with so much apparent regard for my safety and well-being, that I thought it prudent to enter the house, which I had no sooner done than a man made his appearance in so high a state of excitement, that I was at a loss to tell whether he was suffering intense bodily pain, or whether reason had unfortunately vacated her throne. I felt that I was emphatically in the objective case, and that this enraged individual was about to pour his pent-up wrath upon me. After several severe contortions of his face and unnatural twisting of his lips, the thunder of anger burst forth from him by exclaiming, "O, you rascal! You infernal Black Republican! You nigger thief! You ought to be fried alive!" Feeling that I was treading on dangerous ground, and my life not being insured, I came through the door-way into the open-air with telegraphic speed, thankful that I had escaped from such a depot of inflammation and prejudice, and that I had luckily avoided being the victim of bigotry and hasty judgment. But I was not yet free from danger, for my infuriated judge pursued me with a heavy stick in his hand, and he being a little longer in the legs than I, and his person being very much inflated with passion and hatred against a supposed insurgent, he had not much difficulty in overtaking the individual whom his fancy had formed into a traveling abolitionist, and a violator of the laws of the State through which he was passing. I knew that I had done no harm, or broken any law, or even intended to do so, and therefore ceased running, feeling that my pursuer had might on his side, but that I had right and law on my part. Upon overtaking me he flourished his weapon of destruction over my head, threatening to annihilate from the earth so odious and law-breaking a demon. I begged of him not to strike me, as he was entirely mistaken, as I would clearly prove to him if he would wait and cool off. But, no. He had his mind made up that I was a nigger stealer, or something equally or more contemptible. He would not, or perhaps could not reason, but broke out in the following style: "Scamp and villain, I will open your abolition head. Your skull is brimful of plans to run off with negroes. You are as full of unconstitutional designs and Black Republican notions as a rotten cheese is full of corruption and maggots. You ought to be tortured to death and your carcass given to the dogs." I looked at him in the face and said, "Friend, you are running your head against a post by acting in this manner." "Call me not friend," he exclaimed. "I would like to be your hangman. My heart and soul would run over with joy to suspend you and your whole tribe in the air. O, you infernal Black Republican! You poor, miserable, northern abolition sneak."

By this time I had got to the main road, and was not treading on the ground owned by this hot-tempered and prejudiced man. He told me to leave the neighborhood immediately, and threatened my life several times; but I told him I was now on the road, and not on his ground, and that he must be more cautious in his actions and words towards me. I admitted that he was captain of his own house—that his house was his castle—that he was lord and ruler thereof—that he had a clear right to order any person from his premises; but I denied his right to threaten to take my life, or to act in the insulting and uncalled for and threatening manner that he did. I informed him that I was not going away from the neighborhood—that I was going to stop at the nearest village, call at every house therein, and offer my wares for sale. He left me, threatening to fetch his gun

and loose the dogs on me. I told him his talk was behind the age, and that in his calmer moments he would see that he had done wrong towards me, and that he had acted with a high hand and a tyrant's spirit. I bid him good-day, to which he responded by calling me an under-ground railway conductor, and by shaking his stick at me.

On arriving at the next village I had a striking illustration of the difference in mankind. I took my dinner at a gentleman's house, there being no tavern. He would take no pay. He had a number of slaves, but did not take me for a negro thief, as he left me and all his niggers in the house together, while he went to transact his business, and gave me an invitation to stay all night. This circumstance did much to remove the cloud that had been gathering on my mind, as I now discovered that all the good people were not dead, but that there were still sensible and unbiased people to be found. I related to several residents of the village the barbarous reception that I had met with on the way, and they all knew my man well. He bore a tolerable good character, with the exception of having a most violent and dangerous temper. He was kind to the poor, very sociable, and good company; an excellent neighbor, and always ready to lend a helping hand in pecuniary matters, either to the church or to individuals. He was, in fact, what is termed a clever fellow; but he had, like many more men, a weak point. His weakness consisted in his belief that every strange man passing along the road with a bundle under his arm or a pack upon his back, had a design upon the niggers, and was going to pocket them, or convey them away from their owner in some way or shape. This otherwise clever man, the moment he set his eyes on a stranger, became lost and demented by suspicion and ungovernable wrath. In the stranger he could not possibly see anything but a lurking kidnapper, and a man who intended to steal his property, his slaves, the owner of which was fully entitled to hold by the Constitution of our country, covering North and South.

CHAPTER II.

Taken for Cook.—A lady makes mischief.—The alarm given.—Overtaken by three men on horseback.—A fussy nigger.—Writer taken to a tavern to be examined.—Becomes a lion.—A midnight predicament.—Is locked up.—Discharged.—A jolly landlord.—Re-arrested.—Niggers terrified, and flee at the sight of a peddler.

ABOUT fifteen miles from the scene of my last adventure, I met with a lady so blinded with prejudice that she denounced all northern persons as traitors, schemers, and unconstitutionalists. I made my business known to her, displaying my goods to her view. She gave me a very searching look, and inquired of me if I was "Cook." I informed her that I was fortunate enough not to be that misguided individual; but I could read it in her face that she strongly suspected me of being no one else but Cook himself. My feelings were very singular on this occasion, being much alarmed, and at the same time convulsed with laughter at the singular position in which the lady's imagination had placed me. A little six years' old negress was sitting on the door-steps, whom the lady of the house grasped by the arm and jerked into the dwelling, saying, at the same time, "Cook or no Cook, begone from hence, sir," and the door was closed in my face with a powerful bang. I now felt that I was truly a stranger and among strangers, and that I could both sing and feel that there was no place like home. I accordingly began to consider the propriety of retracing my footsteps, in order to escape the warm receptions that appeared to be in store for me on every hand if I continued to go ahead. Then, again, I thought I was in my own native land—the mighty republic of America—the hope of the down-trodden and the oppressed of all nations; the land where the tree of freedom was planted, the fruit of which the tax-burdened and goarded inhabitants of the old world were grasping at, hoping, almost against hope, at some future period to taste the sweet and uplifting influence of equal rights and republican principles. Why,

then, should I turn back? I had no treason or harm to government or to individuals. To retreat from pursuing my journey and gaining an honest living smacked of cowardice; so I resolved to pocket all the insults and dimes that came in my way, and to travel on. But the courteous lady spoken of above had spread it around the neighborhood that there was a probability that her premises had been favored with a visit from the much sought after Cook, for I found myself overtaken when three or four miles from her house by two white men and one colored man, all mounted on horseback. Blackivory tried to look mighty friendly, and essayed to be very complaisant. His hook was baited with good nature. He saluted me very warmly, saying, "Ah! Mr. Cook! How do, sir? Right glad to see you well, Mr. Cook!" The eyes of the two white men were fixed upon me, watching the effect of the nigger's congratulation. He extended to me the hand of fellowship, but I informed him that I was rather choice with whom I shook hands, and somewhat aristocratic in my ideas with whom I associated and became friendly with, and declined receiving his hand. I asked the two white men accompanying the darkey if he was their property and in their charge, and informed them that I considered him a mighty fussy nigger for the first time of our meeting, for I had never seen him before to my knowledge, and that he might with equal propriety have called me Gov. Wise as Cook, for I was just as much one as the other. The guardians of the State escorted me to a tavern, where I was questioned, cross-questioned, and required to give a satisfactory account of myself. I was measured by Cook's standard, surrounded by a number of wondering and sight-loving people, but was declared by the judges not to be the man. I took my supper, and tried to forget the "difficulties of the way" by retiring to bed. In the morning when I partook of breakfast, I discovered that I was transformed into a lion, for there were not less than two hundred people drawn to the house to behold me; "Just to have a look at the fellow, any how," as some of the crowd remarked. I never was before so eagerly sought after in all my life, or commanded so much attention. Several of my admirers asked me questions, such as "From the North, young man?" "Think of going further South, sir?" "Traveling alone, stranger?" One individual, whose curiosity was only equaled by his unbounded impudence, inquired of me if I carried a revolver, and manifested a great desire to impress upon the minds of the spectators that I might be an itinerant sower of discord and mischief. Others repudiated such an idea, and said they considered the union and the constitution of the country safe as far as I was concerned. I made a brief speech, in which I stated where I was from, and that I was not traveling for any unlawful purpose, but simply for the benefit of my health, and concluded by inviting the crowd to purchase my goods. I sold considerable, and found that all did not think me a disturber of the peace of their commonwealth.

I traveled some sixteen or eighteen miles before I tried to make another sale, but the doors and windows of the houses were frequently filled by persons looking after me as I passed by their dwellings, some of whom tried very hard to get up a conversation with me, but their suspicious looks and cold but inquisitive manners chilled my sociable qualities and spurred me onward.

I found some trouble in obtaining a place to sleep, but finally secured lodging at a tavern, but not before I answered several impertinent questions put to me by the landlord, who placed my merchandise in his store-room, and said it was usual to pay in advance for sleeping accommodations. I gave him fifty cents, which he threw into his money-drawer, remarking, "That is right, sir."

In the middle of the night I was aroused from my sleep by the calls of nature, but my room was not furnished with a chamber-utensil; I therefore concluded to make for the yard, but found that I was a prisoner, my bed-room door being locked on the outside. I was under the painful necessity of using the window, an act to which I was driven by the force of circumstances. Unfortunately the proprietor of the establishment had his head out of the window under me, and, as a matter of course, became the recipient of a warm baptism. I heard him utter some heavy

oaths. In the morning I learned that latterly he was in the habit of watching out of his window, gun in hand, for midnight prowlers. I made a full confession to him that I was the author of the shower bath he had received, but that the individual who had neglected to properly furnish my sleeping apartment was the real cause of the mishap. He seemed to have the good sense to appreciate the awkward predicament in which I was placed, and cracked several jokes while we were partaking of breakfast. Some of our table companions tried to vex him by calling him a salted herring and a brine-pot, but he was temper-proof, and laughed heartily at the matter while asking them if they would take a little more beef-steak or a piece more chicken.

I remained in this neighborhood two days without meeting with any unpleasant demonstrations or hostility from strangers. My landlord used his influence to persuade his neighbors to patronise me, and his humorous disposition and ready wit were the means of my effecting some sales. But the even tenor of my way was not to remain undisturbed. When I got a few miles to the south I was called upon to "surrender," by two men sitting under a tree in a garden by the roadside. I stood still, wondering what new act was going to be played. I then moved a few yards in the direction of my challengers, at the same time trying to get the pack of goods from my back. They both arose very quick, and I thought showed a disposition to move from me. I said to them, "Gentlemen, I am a law-abiding man. Do not be alarmed at my presence. I intend no harm to any person. I 'surrender'. What do you wish with me?" They told me that they formed part of a committee to watch the movements of strangers, as that region had lately been troubled by lawless men. They had no specific charge to make against me, and only desired to satisfy themselves that I was not a plotter of mischief or an enemy to the peace and safety of society. Their moderate tone at once disarmed me of all reserve, and I gave them a clear and satisfactory account of myself. I accepted of their hospitality and tarried all night.

The next day I was favored with a proof of the veneration and respect that the negroes in this neighborhood have for any one passing by with whom they are unacquainted. I counted seven persons engaged on the grounds close to a large building, built of gray stone. Its appearance indicated wealth, and commanded the attention of passers-by, being a noble-looking house surrounded with rich and valuable lands. As I approached the premises all the hands entered the house. Looking behind me I discovered a large body of birds flying towards me, and I thought it not unlikely that the parties had gone into the house to prepare themselves to have a shot at the feathery tribe; but I was soon undeceived in my supposition. I found no white people in the house, but seven darkies, protruding their woolly cocoa-nuts through the windows. The doors were all locked, and I was told that I was an object of terror, as it had been reported that there were bad white people roving through the country, whose object was to take colored persons from a good home, and to take them to the north to die with cold and want. My stay was as brief as possible. As I was leaving the farm-yard an aged and white-headed son of Africa said to me, "What your object, please, gentleman?" I told him I wished to see his master, in order to pay a few hundred dollars that I was indebted to him. The object of my visit seemed to unscare them, and they all commenced to prate like so many blackbirds, telling me not to forget to "call when master was to-home."

CHAPTER III.

Unpopularity of peddlers.—Harsh sentence uttered by a passer-by.—Interesting conversation with a landlord.—A black divine overrunning with abolitionism.—A whole village arrayed against peddlers.—Answers received when trying to sell.—Ladies are insulting and sarcastic — Give it up for a bad job.—No bed.—An adamantyne landlord.—A horrible night in the open-air.—A feverish dream.—A noble Irishman.—Alarm of a whole family.

For some miles beyond the black scene mentioned in the above chapter, I was covered with insults as I called at the houses, and met with incivility and rebuff on every hand. Civilization seemed to be getting scarce. I inquired of a man who passed by what time of day it was, and he answered me, "Time all such abolition dogs as you were hung up." I was unable to speak another word to him. It appeared as though his untrue and fanatical expression had paralyzed my vocal powers. It was some time before my system resumed its natural feeling. This man was the proprietor of the gray stone building before mentioned. I should have thought that a man who had wit enough to accumulate such a desirable piece of property, would have been blessed with more sense and discretion than to berate a person whom he knew nothing ill of, as being a dog and a fit subject for the gallows, when he was a perfect stranger to me and I to him. I call such conduct red-hot fanaticism and baneful prejudice, as well as persecuting and oppressing the stranger. I soon arrived at a tavern, where I asked the landlord if I could be accommodated, when the following discourse took place:

Landlord.—You ask me for accommodations. That is a matter yet to be decided upon. Where do you hail from, sir?

Peddler.—I belong to Maryland.

L.—Belong to Maryland! You must be rich, then, if you own the State of Maryland! What have you got in your Indian-rubber pack?

P.—I will give my pack into your custody till to-morrow morning. It contains the goods which I am offering for sale?

L.—You might give an infernal machine into my custody, and blow me and my household to heaven. Such things have been done. What are you, French, Dutch, or Yankey Doodle?

P.—Dutch, Irish, French, or whatever you like to consider me. I am, like your noble self, a human being, the workmanship of a divine power.

L.—Are you all right?

P.—I expect so. In what respect do you mean? Money matters, I presume?

L.—No, I do not mean that exactly, though my pay is of paramount importance. Are you one of the fellows who have been trying to upset Harper's Ferry and defying Uncle Sam?

P.—I am an upholder of the Constitution of our country, and I say that the South has, according to that sacred instrument, a right to hold property in the shape of slaves, and to defend herself when her rights are assailed. I am not a peace-breaker nor an enemy to southern laws and privileges. She has laws that will be enforced and rights that will be maintained.

L.—What's your politics? Are you a Democrat or a Know Nothing?

P.—My politics are to do right, and to do unto others as I would have them do to me.

L.—You ought to carry a passport, signed by some official in your neighborhood.

P.—That would be a miserable business to be carried on in a free country like ours.

L.—I will let you stay over night, but I do not care much about keeping strangers.

I took supper, and went to bed earlier than common, in order not to be bored with questions put to me by persons visiting the house. I was so overwhelmed with prying and officious characters, that I almost fancied myself a prisoner of some overbearing and monarchical government, instead of being a subject of the stars and stripes. I did a little business in the neighborhood, and found a few people who, notwithstanding the excitement produced by Brown's insurrectionary movement, did not condemn innocent people. About three miles from the above place I was overtaken by a black fellow, whose neck was enveloped in a white choker, and whose address and appearance would impress you with the idea that he was a pulpit orator. He was brimful of abolitionism, and asked me my opinion of Brown. I was guarded in my conversation, thinking he might be sent after me as a "feeler." I told him, in my opinion, Brown would certainly dangle for his lawless acts. I had some difficulty in getting rid of my clerical-looking companion, and had to resort to stratagem to clear myself from his company.

The next village I came to I found the inhabitants *en masse* down on peddlers, as they had had a meeting, put their heads together, and in their assembled wisdom resolved to annihilate all peddlers calling upon them. I was told it would be advisable for me to pass through without attempting to sell my goods, as my efforts would be useless, and only a waste of my time. I, however, thanked my friends for their gratuitous advice, but determined, in my own mind, to give every house a call, and see and try what could be done.

Call No. 1.—Nigger answers door-bell. Handed him some articles to carry up stairs to his mistress, telling him to inform her that there was a peddler at the street-door, and that I was prepared to sell very low, as I was in great need of money. Cuffy returned with goods, saying his mistress thought they might be stolen property.

Call No. 2.—Yellow girl attends to the door summons. Told her to tell the lady of the house a *gentleman* wished to see her. Madam honored me with her presence, but defaced all her beauty, good looks and ladyship the moment I told her my business. O for the descriptive pen of a Milton and the fertile imagination of a Shakspeare to picture this pouting and maddened lady-duck. Contempt and scorn covered the whole of her handsomely-featured face. She gave me a withering and half-demoniacal look, as she informed me that it was against the rules of her establishment to patronise peddlers. The orange-colored girl got her ears warmed for having the audacity to bring her amiable and heavenly-minded mistress down stairs to view such trash as a *gentleman peddler*.

Call No. 3.—Little girl put her head out of the window, saying, "Mother, look here; another abolition man on the steps!" I did not wait for any more.

Call No. 4.—a gentleman appears, having a pair of green goggles mounted on his nose, indicating that he was not blessed with the best of eye-sight. He gazed upon me for a few moments, and appeared to be arranging his ideas for delivery. At length he issued the following uncharitable expressions: "I cannot purchase of you. If I did I should be encouraging idleness. Itinerants and rascality always go hand-in-hand." His manner was so pompous that I thought it prudent not to argue the falsity of his assertions.

Call No. 5.—Lady invites me in. Examines all my goods; admires very much; puts me to considerable trouble; is very polite; finally informs me that her father's store was robbed about a month ago by two strangers, supposed to have come from the North, and that she had concluded to make her purchases from a respectable and established firm.

Call No. 6.—Lady puts her head out of the window on hearing me knock, and assures me that if her husband "were to-home" I would be punished for disturbing her by my outlandish knocking, and ordered me to go away, and not to dirty her clean steps.

Call No. 7.—Nigger refuses to announce my arrival to his mistress, or to carry my goods up stairs for her inspection. Says he has received orders to carry no

"truck" up stairs, on pain of being kept without his daily bread for three successive meals.

Call No. 8.—Lady sees me coming towards her house as she looks out of the second story window, and calls most lustily for Peggy to hurry up and bolt the back-door, and to bring up stairs all the silver spoons. I knocked at the door, but received no answer. All was as still within as a church-yard at midnight.

Call No. 9.—A dry-goods store. Proprietor has made up his mind never to buy of peddlers any more as long as he lives. Two years ago he had a colored boy stolen from him, and had strong reasons for believing that the deed was done by a peddler who had been in the neighborhood.

Call No. 10.—No, sir. I would not buy of you if you would sell to me at one-fourth the usual prices. Selling books, gambling, swindling, or anything else except work for some people.

I assured this old lady that I was not a swindler, and that peddling was, in my opinion, hard work.

Finding the inhabitants so much opposed to me, I abandoned the idea of trying to sell at the rest of the houses, and went to the tavern to rest me and to partake of refreshments. The landlord laughed heartily at my difficulties, remarking that the village was fortified to repel all intruders. In the evening I went to church. It was ten o'clock before the services concluded, and when I reached the tavern I requested to be shown the way to bed, when, to my amazement and mortification, I was told that there was not a spare bed in the house. I remonstrated against such treatment, offering to pay all demands. I found that mine host, to make himself popular with the inhabitants of the village, would not furnish me with a bed. I told him I would sleep in the bar-room, on the sofa, on the parlor-floor, or any place he saw fit to put me, as it was now half-past ten, and most of the people in the village had retired for the night. But my talk made no impression upon him. As well might I try to split a rock by throwing snow-balls thereat, as to try to move him from his unaccommodating and self-interested determination. To seek for lodgings at that late hour of the night, in the midst of a population whose finer feelings and hospitable dispositions had been blunted by the Harper's Ferry outrage, would be a dangerous undertaking, and my petitioning for a night's rest would be construed into a mere subterfuge for the performance of some illegal and diabolical deed.

My sleeping apartment on that night was the open-air; my bed, the bare ground; and my pillow, the stump of a tree, covered with a few dried leaves which I had scraped together. The damp and the dew told upon my system. My sleep was broken and feverish, and my imagination unnaturally excited. I beheld, in my feverish dream, a civil war, Maryland being the battle-ground. Our glorious flag of stars and stripes appeared to be surrounded with a bordering of black letters, which read, "The Union shall be preserved, no matter how great the cost or how enormous the sacrifice." I saw Washington weeping, and Lafayette looking very sorrowful.

The justice or the injustice of the principles of slavery had never occupied my attention. I had been in the world thirty-three years and never devoted one hour of my life in meditating upon this subject, but my mind was now impressed with the idea that if owning negroes was an evil, that evil, as in other States, would be legally and by degrees abolished, and was never to be remedied by introducing the still greater evil of sacrificing the lives of white people to free the illiterate and inferior race of negroes.

I breakfasted at the house of a noble Irishman. I told him what a miserable and exciting night I had passed. He said but little, his lips being almost sealed upon the all-absorbing insurrectionary excitement then agitating the country. Feeling unwell he furnished me with a bed, and said I was welcome to stay at his house as long as I thought proper, and that, too, without money and without price.

The unfriendly feeling that I had previously to contend with took considerable

of the mercantile spirit from me, and lessened my enterprise materially ; but as I began to feel the inconvenience, of an empty pocket, I was compelled to renew my attempts to drive a bargain with somebody. My customer was a miller. It was nearly dark when I knocked at his door. "Come in," said a female. I did as I was ordered, with my pack upon my back, bidding them good evening, telling them that I was a peddler, and that I was sorry to trouble them at that time of day, but that necessity had no law, for I wanted money very much, and would give them an excellent bargain for a little of the precious metal. The fears of the whole family, consisting of father and mother, two daughters and a son, were aroused. It was painful to witness the distrust and want of confidence exhibited in all their faces as they looked at each other, and then fixed their concentrated gaze upon me. After a few moments of silence the head of the house spoke, saying, "Friend, (for such I hope you to be,) the critical state of the times demands that we should be careful with whom we deal. I will give you an instance of the truth of my assertion. A short time ago a man came to my house selling a book, called the 'Life of Washington.' He sat in the same chair and in the same corner which you now occupy. His appearance was genteel. His feet were encased in a pair of French patent leather boots. His clothing was fashionable, and composed of the best material. A gold watch and finger-rings decorated his person. He was not only silver-tongued but well-informed, and knew how to hold an argument. He was calculated to find favor and make a good impression wherever he went. The nice young man, selling the 'Life of Washington,' was the leading topic of conversation among our neighbors. That selfsame man, Mr. Peddler, was one of the deluded beings who took part in the Harper's Ferry insurrection, and paid for his folly by forfeiting his life. He was, undoubtedly, a rabid abolitionist, taking notes and making observations to facilitate the plans of a few unwise men."

I intended to try to put up with this old gentleman, but after hearing the above statement I did not feel like asking for the favor. I walked to the next tavern, where I found good accommodations at reasonable prices.

CHAPTER IV.

People reserved.—Arrested.—Bar-room scene.—Examination.—Search of person and property.—Letter read.—Night Guards.—Yankee Swindlers.—Political meeting.—Taken for a spy.—No accommodations.—Noble and clever printers.—Hostile remarks of a lady and a gentleman.—Board with a family of Virginians.—Coat and shirt taken from back to find bullet-holes.—Surrounded by 150 school boys.

IN this region I found the population less severe, and I made some tolerable good sales ; but still caution and reserve on the part of buyers and others were very palpable. I met with some hard thumps in the shape of insults. I stopped in this neighborhood three days, and my ideas of civilization went up. Night found me at the top of an immense mountain, over which the main road crossed. Here I was congratulating myself on my day's work being done and a tavern being near at hand, where I should be able to procure something for the good of my stomach, when four men suddenly surrounded me, the countenance of each of them bearing a most determined look.

"Good evening, gentlemen. How far is it to a tavern?" said I.

"You appear to have just emerged from the lonesome woods, having reached this main road by traveling the by-path through the mountain. This looks suspicious, and particularly so as it is dark," said one of these men.

"Beg your pardon, sir, but allow me to correct your statement by informing you that I reached the summit of this mountain by the main road, which road I have been traveling for a number of miles," said I.

"We had better take him to the tavern and sound him," said another.

"Yes, gentlemen, that is just the place I wish to go to," said I.

"You must be a stranger hereabouts," said another of the four, "or else you would not inquire where the tavern was situated!"

"You conjecture right, sir; I am a total stranger here," said I.

"We will escort you to the tavern, where, owing to the position which we occupy, we shall be under the necessity of examining you," said he who appeared to be the ruling spirit of the crowd.

"All right, gentlemen. Glad to have so good a body-guard," said I.

We reached the tavern in a very short time. I tried to break the silence of the jaunt thither by getting up a conversation, but it was no go. They evidently thought they had got a prize, and had secured an insurgent in the act of escaping from the interior of the mountain, taking advantage of the darkness of the evening to cover his flight from the gaze of the officers of the law, and from the scrutiny of the eye of the public.

On our arrival at the place of examination we found nine men in the bar-room, to which was added, in an incredible short time, some fifty more, which, together with the captive and the captors, formed quite an interesting company. A chair was handed to me; also, what appeared to be a tumbler full of hot whiskey, which I declined accepting, telling my generous benefactor that I was not accustomed to such injurious and expensive habits.

"What is your name?" said an elderly and tall gentleman, whose commanding and dignified appearance drew the attention of all assembled.

Peddler.—My name is John.

Magistrate.—But John what?

P.—You may call me 'Cheap John,' if you will. I am not desirous of having my name published.

M.—Well, John, I am empowered to examine you, and to determine whether you are a violator of the peace of this State.

P.—I am quite satisfied that such should be the case, and I am sure when your judgment is brought to bear upon the subject, you will speedily dismiss the case, and send me on my way rejoicing.

M.—What do you do for a living, John?

P.—I am a peddler, sir.

M.—Have you no trade, John?

P.—Yes, sir.

M.—Would it not be better for you to work at your business than to roam through the country among strangers?

P.—My object in traveling is not a pecuniary matter. I have lost my health, and I am trying to find it by leading an active life, and by getting the benefit of pure country air. I believe these are harmless objects to pursue, and I consider myself more competent to judge what will best suit me than strangers are.

M.—You have a pack, John. What does it contain?

P.—My goods, sir, that I am offering for sale.

M.—I shall have to explore the interior of your pack.

P.—So be it, sir.

M.—Will you fetch it here?

P.—No, sir, excuse me, if you please. My pack is in the bar. I should say that it was the officer's duty both to fetch and unstrap the pack that is to be searched; and, also, when the search is over, to replace the goods therein, and to leave things in as good order as he found them.

The wonderful pack was produced by the landlord and laid upon the table. The spectators gazed at it anxiously, as though it contained the greatest curiosity in creation, or would bring to light some hidden mystery. The worthy official and his assistants vainly searched the curious-looking pack for some evidence of my guilt, but no new developments were made. The inquisitive congregation looked disappointed, and the magisterial dignitary expressed himself pleased that the search had resulted in my favor. My person was next searched, but brought forth no illegal fruit. The lookers-on and the law enforcers certainly felt cheap.

I thought, to all intents and purposes, they had now done with me, and had searched to their hearts' content; but not so, for one of the officers bethought himself that my hat had escaped being scrutinized. It was submitted to their investigation, and found to contain some loose paper and a pair of leather gloves. Each piece of paper was minutely examined, and the inside of the gloves also, in which was found a map of the United States and a letter from my wife, which latter fact brought to light my name.

M.—You must be quite a traveler, John, to require a map.

P.—I am fond of geography, and derive almost unspeakable pleasure from studying the map, which facts will account for my carrying the United States about my person.

M.—I think, John, you are fond of traveling.

P.—Not particularly so, sir. If such was the case, it would not be very extraordinary, when it is taken into consideration that I was born while my mother was traveling in a stage-coach.

M.—There appears to be, if what you say be truth, some romance attached to your history. This is a letter, apparently, from your wife, which, with your permission, we will read.

The magistrate read the letter aloud, the contents of which, like most women's letters, was full of love, wishes for her husband's well-being, and a strong desire that I would make home cheerful and a paradise by returning as soon as practicable.

My wife, being a pious soul, found it difficult to pen her letter to me without dragging into it a few scripture expressions, such as to "*watch and pray*," and to be on my guard against "*the enemy*;" to fight manfully the great battle for eternal liberty, and to put my confidence in Him who was the Captain and Chief of empires and worlds; who commanded the *armies* of heaven, and by whose mighty power all creation could as easily be destroyed as it was called into existence. Some of the would-be-knowing ones shook their heads, and whispered one to another, as the letter was read, that my "*rib*" was giving me military instructions, and urging me on to unconstitutional deeds. My good-meaning wife's piety and and spiritual advice were evidently drawing me into a vortex of tribulation. One of the philosophers present asked me who was the enemy spoken of in the letter. I told him I expected my wife had reference to his Satanic Majesty and all his agents, such as drunkenness, lust, and a host of other vices. Another sage individual, whose frog-shaped mouth and croaking noise caused all eyes to be turned towards him, thought it very singular that a woman's mind should be so much occupied with armies and captains, and war-like ideas, and that he considered the language used in the letter sufficient cause for my detention, hinting that by delaying my liberty something more might be brought to light. The evening began to be far advanced, and my further examination was deferred till the following morning at eight o'clock. The neighborhood was jailless, therefore I was debarred the privilege of experiencing the sensation produced by being caged up within so degrading a place. I was supplied with two guards, who watched my every movement. Had I been a diamond of the highest value I could not have been taken better care of. Cigars, tobacco, liquor, and even the loan of money were offered to me by some of the more intelligent portion of the spectators, some of whom said they could plainly see that I was "*all right*," and that making me a prisoner till the following morning was an act uncalled for. Heart-wearied and body-tired I retired to bed, and was soon joined by my guardians. There were three single beds in the room. I was ordered to take the middle one, my night-guards occupying the other two. At the appointed hour the next morning I was placed before the tribunal of justice.

Refreshing sleep had performed her awakening and invigorating power upon the magisterial faculties of the justice of the peace, and he informed me that I was discharged, and that he hoped the State would never find any greater trouble than myself. Some of the easily excited ones were disappointed at my summary discharge, and thought that the official was too hasty. Their greedy nature was

disappointed of a repast in the further examination and final conviction of a victim to abolition-fanaticism. There were a few whole-souled individuals who shook me heartily by the hand, congratulating me, upon what they felt confident would be the result of my examination, an honorable discharge.

I considered the crowd and excitement to be in my favor, and viewed them as trade winds, and as the tide that would set me afloat from the rocks on which the storm of excitement had cast me. I entered among the crowd, opened my budget, and offered my articles for sale, cheap for cash, at prices to suit the tightness of the money-market. Some of the by-standers appeared somewhat astonished at my conduct; others purchased of me; but I think they were all, more or less, laboring under the fearful epidemic then so general—a pain in the pocket—for I offered goods at unheard of low prices, without succeeding to extract any of the precious metal from the assemblage. In the course of the day I met with several persons who asked me if I was not afraid to peddle at such an exciting period, some of whom would conclude their conversation by relating to me and to others how they had been imposed upon by dealing with merchants of the wooden-ham and artificial nutmeg order. Some had been leeches extensively with bogus jewelry; others had, in their thirst for literary knowledge, being induced, by the favorable appearance and musical talk of periodical canvassers, to pay for publications in advance, which had never come to hand. All complained, in some way or other, of having been the object upon which northern travelers had applied their swindling operations. Some had bought bottled water for silver-plating; others had lost nearly all their teeth by using peddler's tooth-ache drops. One young man had purchased a buggy, the tiers on the wheels of which were made of leather instead of iron. An old lady spoke of a company of young men coming from the north, and hiring a building in the neighborhood for theatrical purposes. The hand-bills stated that the performance would open with the amusing and much-admired piece called "Yankee Tricks." The theatre was full. All had paid their 25 cents admission fee. The performance was a perfect swindle, for nobody appeared upon the stage, and after the money was pocketed by the Yankee Tricks-party nothing more was ever heard of them, the shades of the evening covering their whereabouts.

But these little commercial failings the inhabitants only laughed at, and said they pardoned the perpetrators of them, as one-half the world liked to be humbugged, while the other half only looked on and laughed; but when it came to running away with the slaves and inciting an insurrection, it was a proceeding that could not and would not be tolerated. The power and sovereignty of the State would crush all such high-handed and treasonable acts by punishing, even to death, the authors of such unconstitutional proceedings.

By some unfortunate means the idea of a peddler and an insurgent had become blended together in the minds of the people as being one and the same thing. My calls began to be useless, and only had the disagreeable effect of bringing out the opposition feeling towards peddlers. Night found me at a tavern-door. The bar-room was crowded. I hesitated and listened before I entered, being doubtful whether my entrance might not be considered an intrusion. It was a political meeting. Immediately I entered I perceived that I was spotted for a stranger. I listened attentively to the speaker. He was a little nervous and discomposed. He might have good ideas and talent within him, but he was unsuccessful in producing them to the audience. One man remarked to another that the speaker shone brighter when he was singing the song of the "Knobby Head of Hair" than he did in public speaking. Another *orator* (heaven pardon us for murdering our language) mounted the elevation. He looked around the room with a very serious face. He seemed to be in pain. I thought he might have the jaw-ache, and was going to offer an apology for being unable to speechify. At last he opened his mouth, saying, "Friends and fellow-countrymen, be on your guard. The enemy is in our camp!" and, giving his arm an unusual elevated position, pointed his finger at me, and continued, "that man's a spy, and his ob-

ject is a bad one." Laughter took full possession of me, body, soul and spirit. I endeavored to make my way towards a stout gentleman with a red face and an entertaining appearance. I inquired of him if he was the proprietor of the establishment. He answered in the affirmative. I said to him, in a loud tone, "I am a traveler and a stranger, and do not wish to spy anything except a good bed to sleep in, and some supper to eat. If any man considers either of these objects bad ones, particularly to a weary and hungry individual, I cannot help it." During the few minutes I was talking the proceedings of the meeting stopped, and the attention of the assembly was directed to the "spy." I failed in getting accommodations, and had to walk three miles further before I came to another tavern. Meetings appeared to be all the go, for the bar-room here was also occupied as a speaker's platform. However, the political demonstration in this last case did not deprive me of a good night's rest. I did a little business here, after being very much interrogated as to where I was from, &c., but found the people more moderate and less fearful of me being a worker of iniquity.

The next town that I arrived at was small, but supported, and was illuminated by the light proceeding from the publication of, two newspapers. I had always from my childhood a profound respect for printers. My father received a great favor from the hands of a printer, and that might, in some measure, account for his impressing it upon my youthful mind that printers were men of influence and intelligence. My curiosity prompted me to call upon these pioneers of knowledge and civilization. They paid me liberally for my goods. Here I found no narrow-mindedness. No insulting language or base threats were to be found in these depositories of light and refinement. Suspicious looks and vile insinuations could not here be discovered. No, no! Such mean materials could not find an abode amongst printers. I had stumbled into the company of the followers of Faust, Guttenburg, Schoeffer, and Ben Franklin. I had got into the society of Nature's noblemen—the lights of the world. I think it may be set down as an established fact that there is something elevating about the calling of a printer—something that enlarges the mind, and frees the understanding from the dross of bigotry and prejudice. This enlightening and expansive influence is often spread throughout a whole town, and frequently disseminates the length and breadth of an entire county. Printers are—as their intelligence and business command they should be—influential characters. Ride on, Mighty Power of the Press, attended with thy retinue of heaven-born attributes. To thee we pay our homage. Thou art the great medium through which the human race are improved and uplifted.

In this town and neighborhood I met with nothing to complain of. It appeared as though I had emerged from civil-war and semi-barbarism into a more civilized and christian community. Two days after my departure from this place I was assailed by seven or eight boils breaking out upon my person. They grew rapidly, and gave me intense pain, causing me to walk lame. They were not ordinary boils, but of an extraordinary and mammoth size. I, however, hobbled along to the next town, where my haggard looks and miserable walk were the cause of again bringing out the cloven-foot of suspicion to attack me. It seemed to be the general opinion that I was, beyond the shadow of a doubt, a crippled insurgent. One good-natured soul whispered in my ear that for a certain consideration he would convey me into one of the free States. I told him what was the matter with me, but he seemed very dubious, shaking his head and saying, "It won't do, old fellow! You smell a little too strong of Harper's Ferry!" My next compliment was from a lady, who remarked to a female with whom she was in company, that I walked as though I might have half a dozen bullets lodged in my body. Remarks now began to be a little too personal, and I made a very good attempt to render myself more obscure by retiring to a tavern, having tried at some five or six regular taverns and three boarding-houses. But, alas! like Noah's dove, I could find no resting-place. I ultimately met with an old ady, a Virginian, who inquired of me if I had the rheumatism. I told her ex-

Unknown debt

10/15/14.

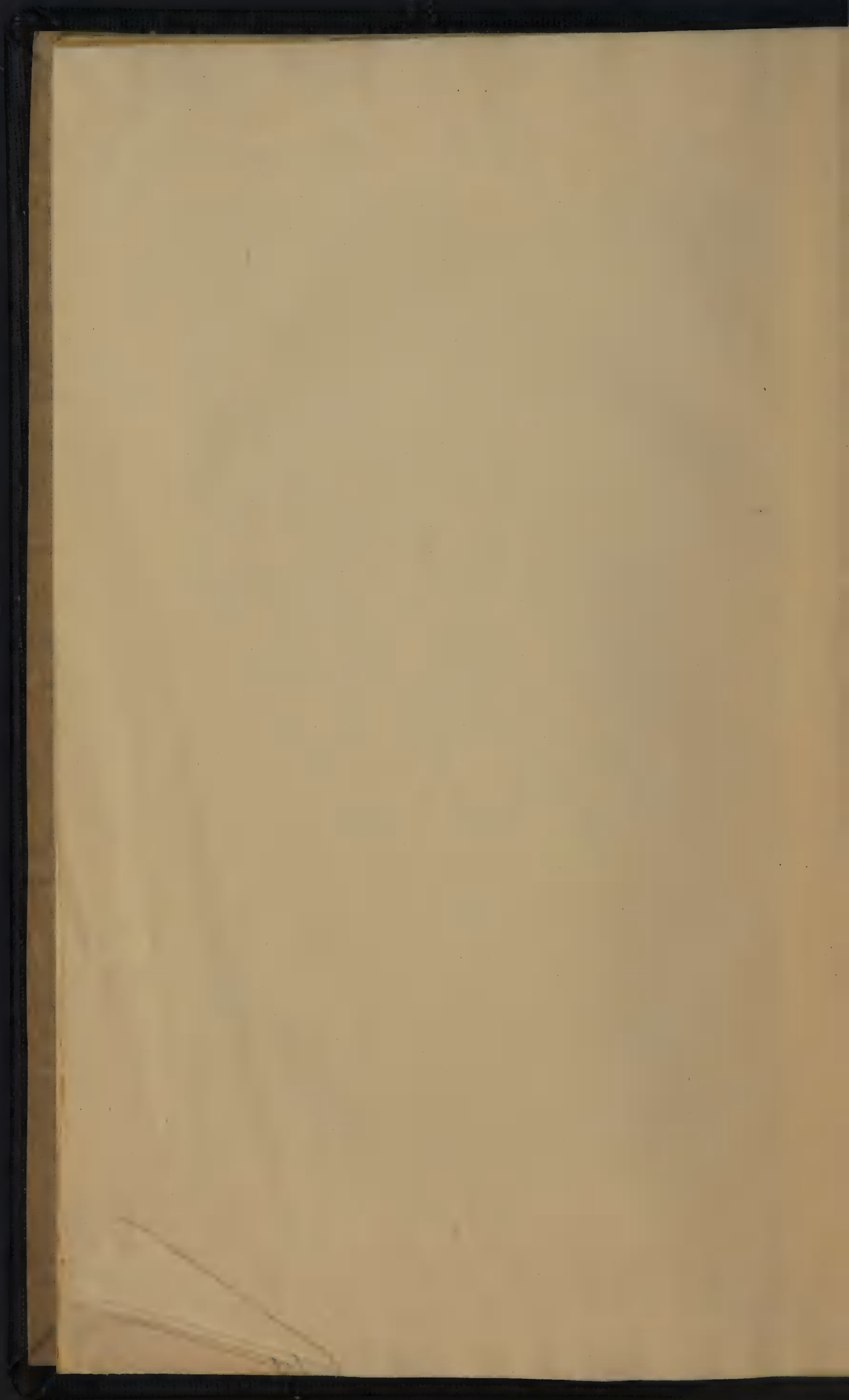
actly how I was fixed, offering to pay her well if she would grant me a stopping-place for a few days till I recovered. She coincided with the rest of the people with regard to my lameness and my being a stranger working against me. She looked me very earnestly in the face, at the same time telling me that she understood physiology, and that I could, with her husband's consent, stop at her house till I was able to travel, as she did not think that I was an evil-disposed person, and that I was only overtaken by circumstance over which I had no control. The whole of her family were pious. Prayer was offered up morning and evening, and a chapter read from the Book of Life. On Sunday morning I was invited to church, and was told by two of the members thereof that when I was tired of my boarding-house I could make their house my home. The manner and conversation of these people were unselfish and void of pride. Their deportment led me to think that there was something more in piety than sound and profession.

On Monday morning I was met in the street by a party of gentlemen, who politely hinted to me that they would like to look at the cause of my lameness, and hold a little conversation with me. I was agitated by such an unpleasant announcement, but had to submit, as I found they had investigating authority. I refused to take my coat off. I was informed that I would be required to take off my shirt. I told them they would have to take both off my back, as I would not do it myself to gratify them. Two of the party soon stripped me of my coat and shirt, exposing to view three large boils of California magnitude, around which had accumulated considerable proud flesh. My legs were in almost as bad a condition as my back. The committee of investigation seemed doubtful of the truth of my word, and nothing would satisfy that illustrious body but the testimony of one of the medical faculty that I had not been wounded in the Harper's Ferry fracas. One of the investigators appeared to be quite confirmed in the idea that he was one of the lucky heroes who had taken part in the capture of one of Brown's aid-de-camps, and spoke of probing for balls in my back. The arrival of the doctor, however, soon extinguished all erroneous ideas about my history, by informing the busybodies that I was the unfortunate owner of six of the largest boils he ever beheld. I was therefore instantly discharged, and those by whom I was arrested became the laughing-stock of the whole town.

I was wending my way to the dwelling of my christian friend and benefactor, when three boys met me, one of whom cried out, "Here comes the abolitionist," and at the same moment a school close to me was discharged. I was surrounded by about 150 school-boys, all of whom seemed to take a great interest in my welfare, some asking me if I was shot very bad. Others inquired of me if I had received any injury beyond flesh-wounds. I was remarkably civil, lest like a swarm of bees, they should all attack me, thinking they were playing a patriotic part in so doing. My pain of body and of mind now became almost unbearable. I reached my friend's house, bid the family good-day, and thanked them for their kindness. No pay would be received.

If I continued to travel I should probably again have to submit to the humiliating operation of being searched, as well as having to contend with public opposition to peddlers. In order, therefore, to free myself from these obstacles to my traveling propensities, I entered into one of the northern States as quick as possible, fully determined never to attempt to peddle in the South during an excitement like the one produced by the unconstitutional and treasonable actions of Brown and his deluded disciples.

Reader, farewell. And if the reading of these pages has strengthened you in your determination to maintain unbroken the glorious Union of the States of our Republic, and has confirmed you in your love for the prosperity, good order, and peace of our country, then the object of the writer is accomplished.



1832752

